

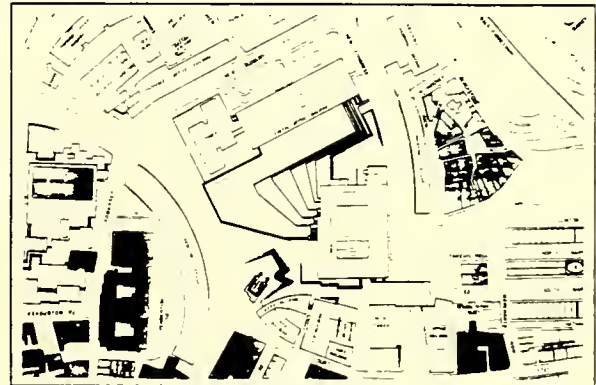
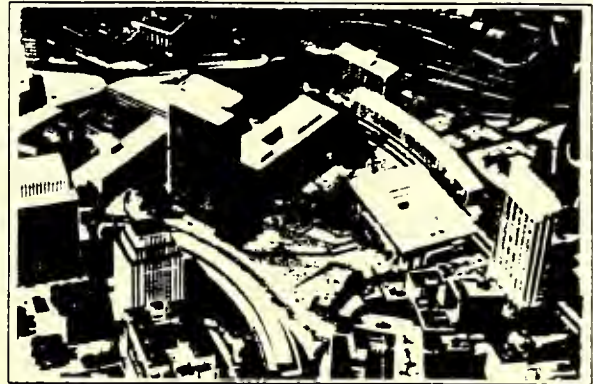
# Government Center Plan

The development of Government Center in the 1960s signalled the beginning of an era of pride and prosperity for Boston. It was intended as the symbol and inspiration for the renewed city.

The Government Center Plan combined preservation of Boston's historic shrines - Faneuil Hall and the Old State House - with a grand civic design. City, regional, state and federal agencies demonstrated unprecedented cooperation in carrying out the master plan. The new district now houses administrative offices and public services for the various levels of government, complementary commercial buildings, and the seats of government for the city, county, and commonwealth. City Hall Plaza provides a huge central space for community celebrations and demonstrations and is the focus and emblem of Government Center.

As part of the Downtown interim planning and rezoning process, the Government Center District Study seeks to carry the Government Center Plan to the level of activity and importance in city life originally envisioned. The study identifies opportunities for three areas of improvement:

1. increased effectiveness of land usage for governmental, commercial, and residential uses, for public open spaces, and for streets and walkways;
2. reinforcement of the district's structure and identity; enhancement of how the district is experienced and envisioned through its sequences of spaces and landmarks, its commemorative symbols, and its public amenities;
3. Special attention to the activity and pedestrian-oriented features of City Hall Plaza and Congress Street, including programming to enliven the area on a daily basis and for special community events, as well as a coordinated public art program to honor historic and contemporary figures and events which have been dedicated to liberty and human rights.



Government Center Urban Renewal Plan 1963

Government Documents

BRA

2442





Aerial Photo Mid 1900s

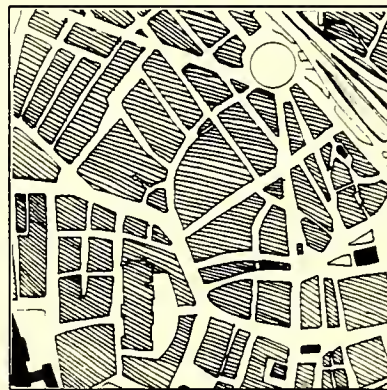


Aerial Photo Today

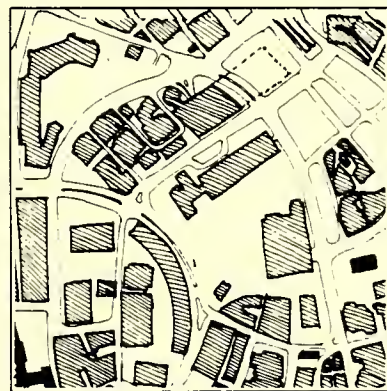
### Building Patterns

In the 1960s, Government Center was carved out of an amorphous hillside section of downtown Boston which had evolved from a colonial neighborhood into a dense commercial district.

The 19th century, four to ten story buildings faced onto a network of winding and sloping city streets and formed oddly-shaped blocks and squares. The area became "blighted" and was redeveloped into a civic center of monumental buildings set on plazas and broad automobile-oriented arteries. The large, hillside district became organized through a simple system of terraces at Congress Street, City Hall Plaza, Pemberton Square, and Beacon Hill at the State House.



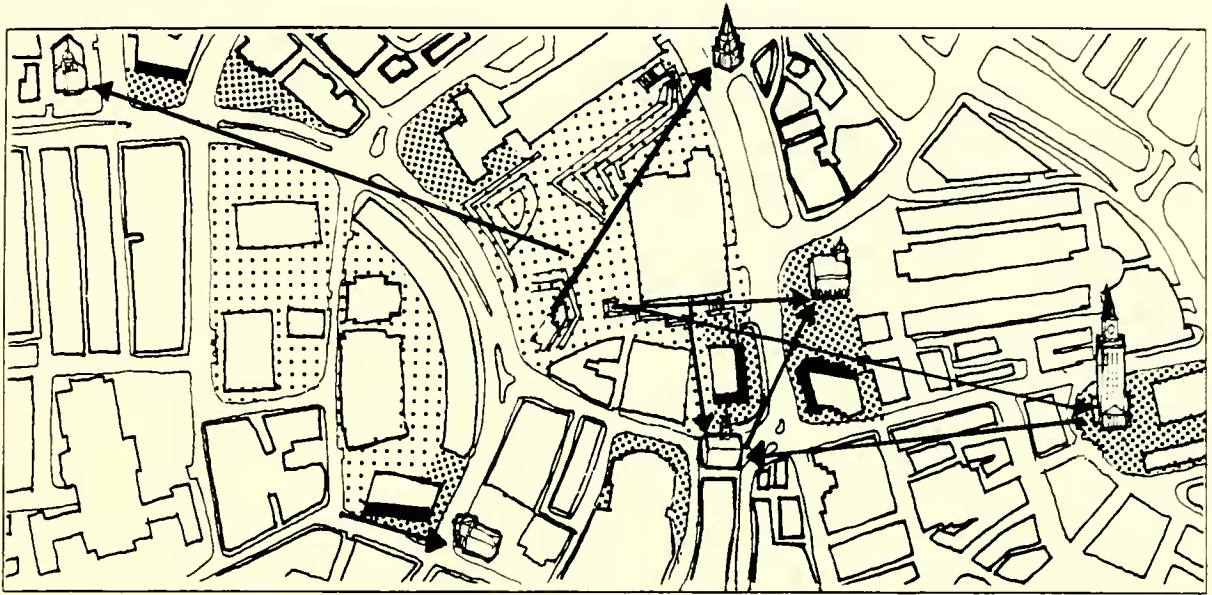
Building Pattern Mid-1900s



Building Pattern Today







## Building Patterns

### Urban Renewal Concepts:

- o Buildings were angled to provide long-distance views to historic landmarks.
- o Towers were set back from historic landmarks, allowing views from the plazas at the bases of the new buildings.

### Recommended New Strategies:

- o Recognize that historic landmarks were originally located within a tightly-packed setting and can have a powerful impact when suddenly come upon at close range.
- o Give more priority to providing a sense of containment along streets and within plazas.
- o Continue to use long distance views to historic steeples and towers as part of planning for a more varied sequence of pedestrian experiences.
- o Continue to take advantage of views of historic buildings in redesigning plazas and infilling with low additions or glass-enclosed winter gardens.



# City Hall Plaza

## Introduction

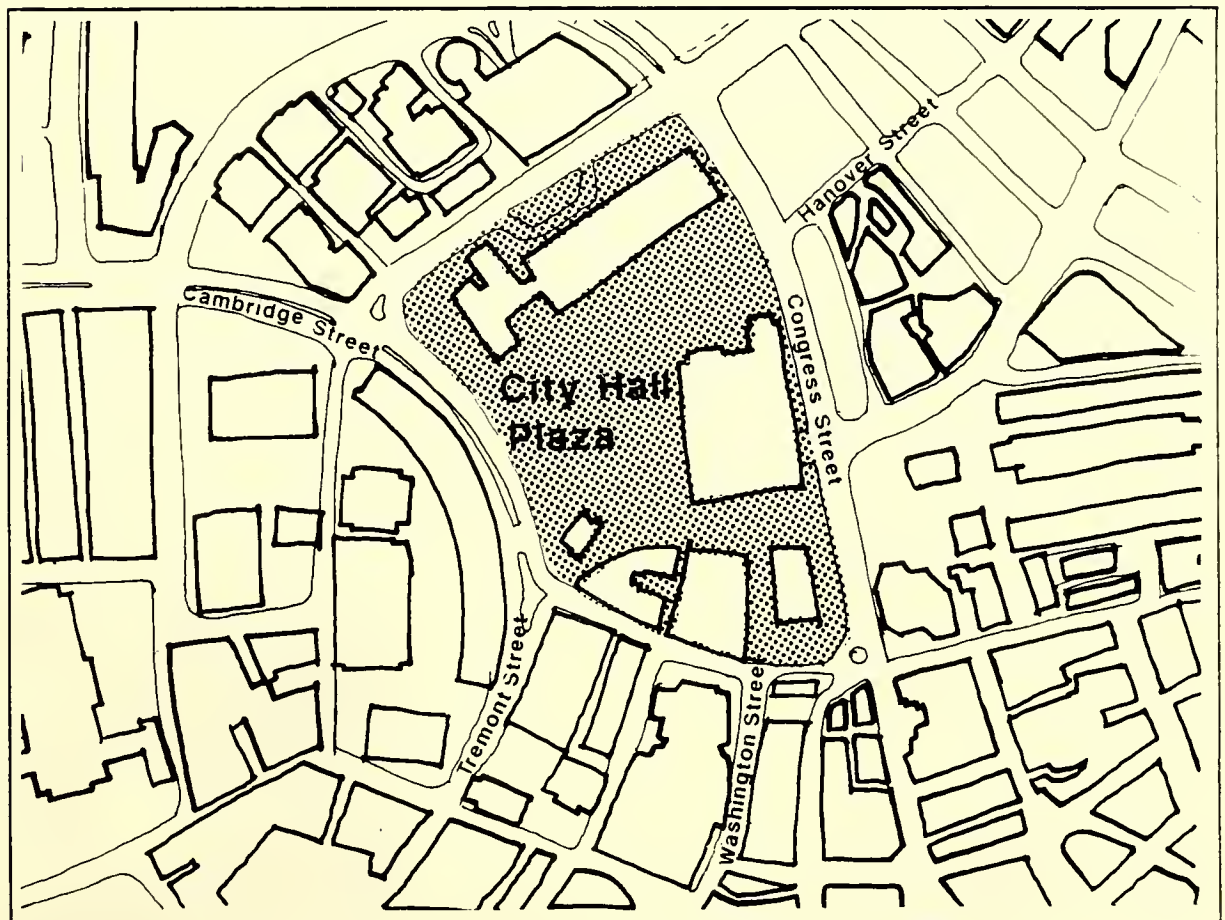
City Hall Plaza is located at the core of Government Center right in the heart of the City of Boston. The image of the plaza with city hall as its main focus symbolizes the city in the mind of Bostonians.

The role of the plaza is multiple. It represents the community through civic events and representations. It is also a part of daily life - eating lunch, walking to work, going to government buildings and Faneuil Hall Marketplace. It serves as an orientation point within the district and directs pedestrian flow toward important destination points on its periphery.

Most of the time, City Hall Plaza is not a destination point - like the Marketplace or the Common - often because of some envi-

ronmental problems (weather and noise) or design problems (complexity of stairs, plaza's edges not contained) and, finally, lack of activity. Nevertheless, the potential exists to enhance people's enjoyment and use of the plaza (its vistas, the presence of special features, the fountain, and amphitheater - , its easy access, its scale).

Potential improvements should stress the implementation of light interventions to accent existing qualities while not competing with the nature and integrity of the space. It might include tree planting, redesigning of stairs, urban furniture, temporary art, diversity of pavement. Each of these needs to be analyzed in terms of use of the plaza and its connection with other surrounding sites.



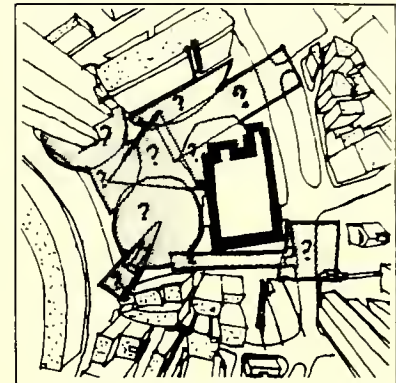
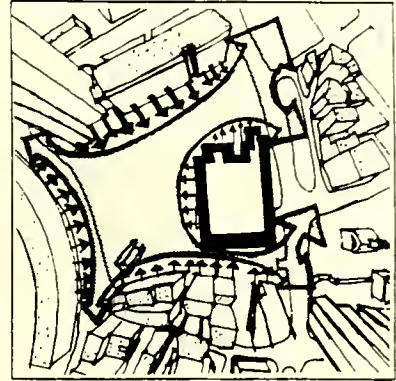




## City Hall Plaza

### Problems:

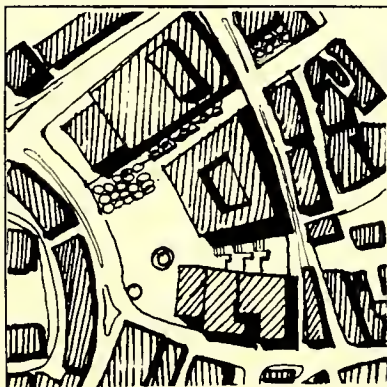
- o The space seems too big and seems to leak out at its corners.
- o There is a lack of activity along the edges.
- o The function and form of the vast plaza's sub-areas are ill-defined.
- o Activities within the plaza often seem somewhat lost in the space and could be more effectively tied to pedestrian flows.



### Early Concepts for City Hall Plaza

The original 1959 Government Center Plan, prepared by Kevin Lynch as the consultant to Adams, Howard, and Greeley, shows some of the preliminary intentions for City Hall and its plaza. Components of this plan have merit for reconsideration despite the fact that the plaza proposed removing the historic Sears Crescent buildings which since have been valued for preservation. The original City Hall Plaza plan envisioned a

more clearly defined and tightly enclosed urban space to serve as a forecourt to the new City Hall. Hanover Street remained on the northern side with several new buildings directly along its sidewalk. The link between the plaza and Dock (Adams) Square was a topographic event of terraces and overlooks; a series of steps flowing down Cornhill and broadening towards a more enclosed square.

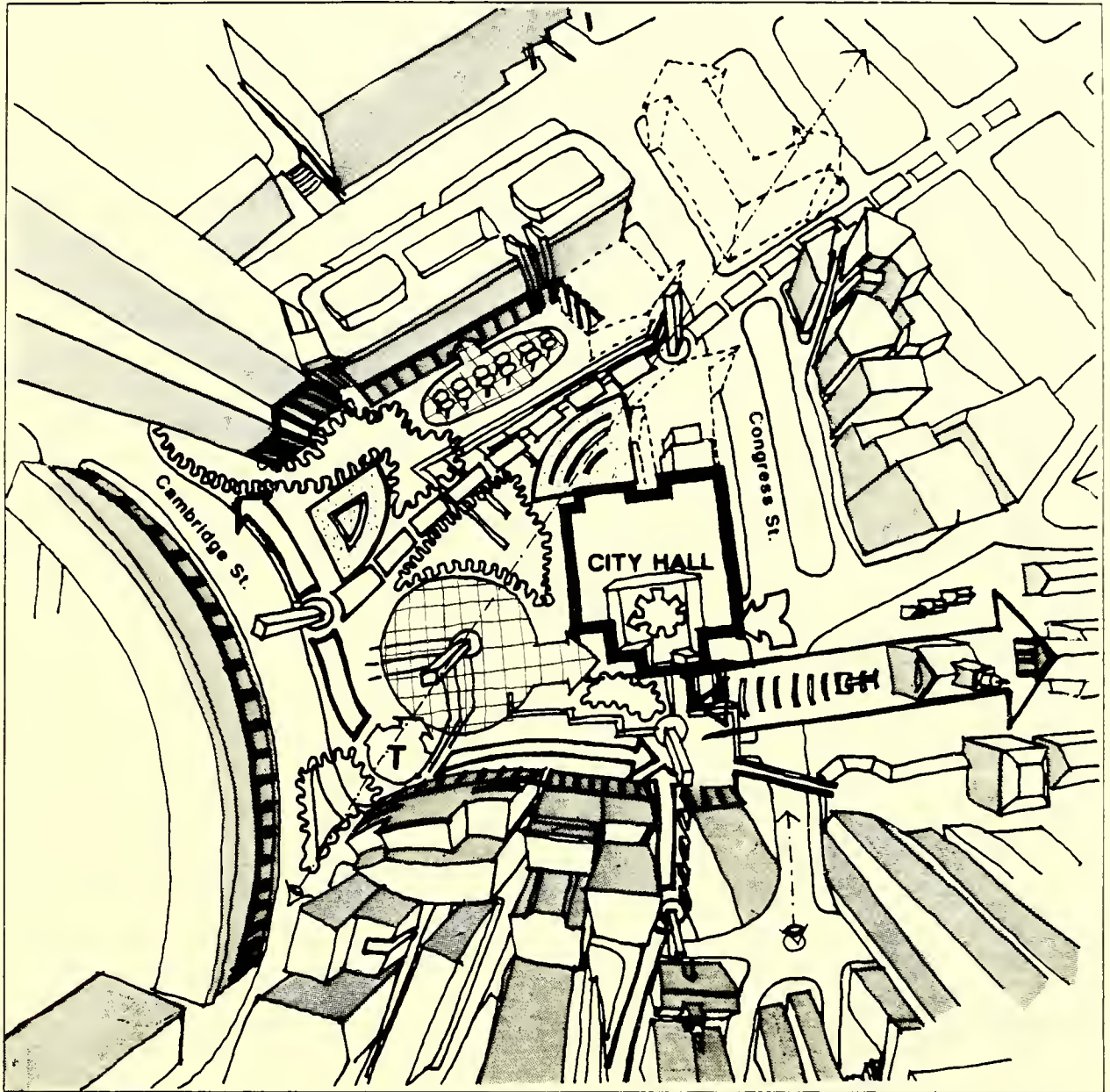


1959 Concept  
for City Hall Plaza





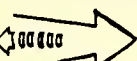
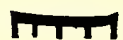


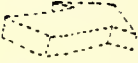


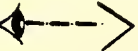


City Hall Plaza  
Today





**City Hall Plaza**  
**Public Space Improvements - Objectives**

- |   |                  |   |                |  |                    |
|---|------------------|---|----------------|--|--------------------|
|  | Forecourts       |  | Hanover Street |  | Pedestrian Path    |
|  | Special Features |  | Dock Square    |  | Activities         |
|  | Subareas         |  | T Station      |  | New Buildings      |
|  | Pivot Points     |  | Lobby          |  | Visual Connections |

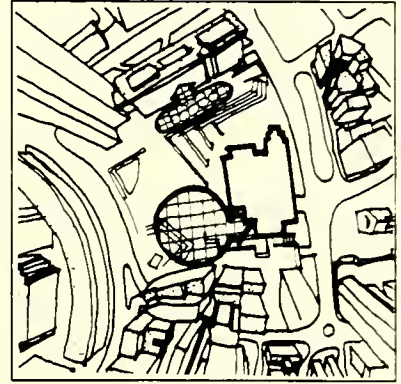






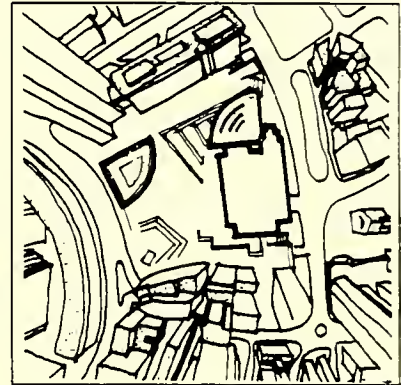
### Forecourts

Establish forecourts for public buildings and articulate building entries.



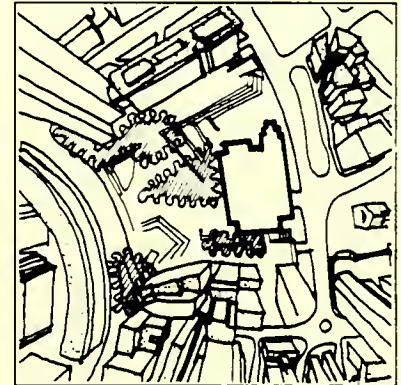
### Special Features

Augment use of fountain and amphitheatre to animate plaza and accentuate their presence.



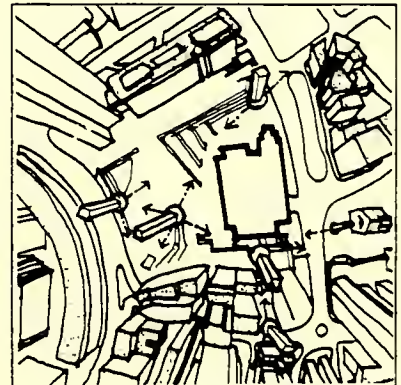
### Subareas

Give use and identity to underutilized sub-areas.



### Pivot Points

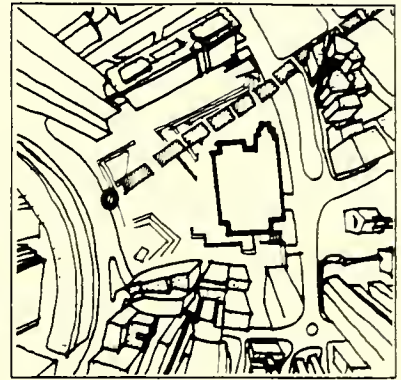
Use vertical elements to create destination markers and pivot points for circulation and to create focal points for subareas.





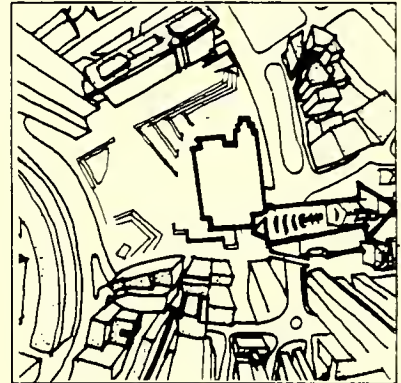
□□□ Hanover Street

Use former Hanover Street alignment as a major path and as an organizing element for plaza subareas.



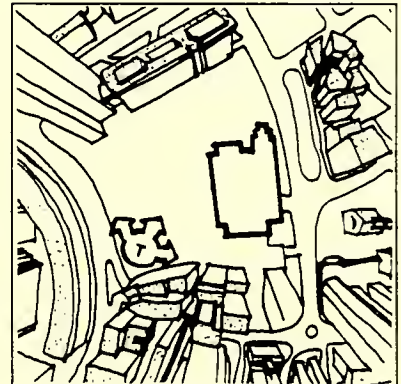
Dock Square

Link City Hall Plaza with Faneuil Hall and recreate integrity of Dock Square.



T Station

Reinforce the MBTA station and its landing space as a major activity generator and orientation point.



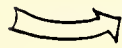
Lobby

Affirm City Hall as the central feature and improve its lobby as a major focus of public activity.



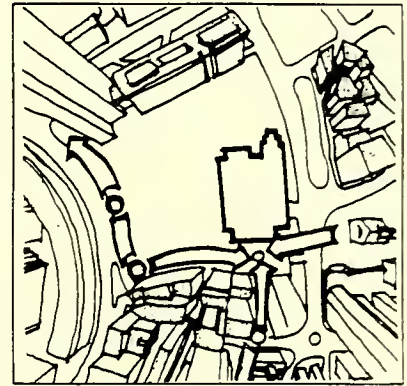






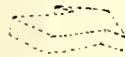
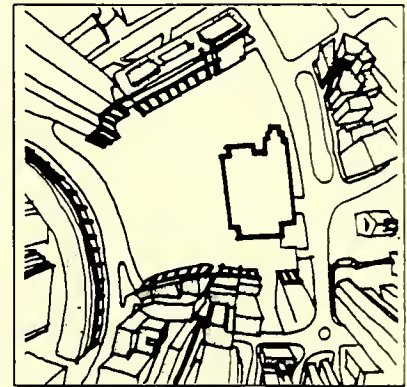
### **Pedestrian Paths**

Articulate and clarify major pedestrian paths.



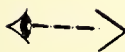
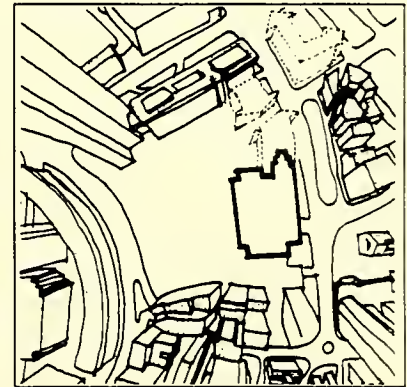
### **Activities**

Root buildings into the plaza space and add activities along the building edges.



### **New Buildings**

Add low new buildings along Congress Street to contain the plaza and streetscape. New structures must not detract from the integrity of City Hall.



### **Visual Connections**

Preserve the visual connection to landmarks such as the Old North Church and design considering the creation of view sequences.

